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New Committee to Put Community First in Library Expansion Project

by Michael Bielawski

HARDWICK — The trustees of Jeudevine Memorial Library are making a final push to recruit community members for the library's building committee.

"The building committee is just taking shape," said board of trustees chair Jodi Lew-Smith. "We have spent several months thinking about how best to form the committee, how to structure it, its expectations, what the work of the committee will be. It was one of our priorities that it has as many community members as possible."

Lew-Smith said the committee's membership will be comprised of two library staff members, two trustees, and six community members. She said the number of community members is not set in stone. Currently, four volunteers have been identified and the committee would welcome more than six, if there were enough interest.

Lew-Smith said that while she isn't asking anyone how they voted on the library bond a year ago, she has a sense that there is some representation from the fiscally conservative side of the debate.

"And I feel like if we had even more of that, that would be good," she added.

She said enthusiasm is up due to the bequest from Parker Ladd, the Hardwick native who left $483,309 to the library.

"Definitely, it feels like the time is now," Lew-Smith said. "And certainly, we should do the best we can to come up with a plan for a project that has pretty wide support and fits our community."

She emphasized that this time around, the trustees will do as much of the fundraising as possible before they go to any bond

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The Man Behind the Surprise Library Bequest

by Michael Bielawski

HARDWICK — Recently, it was announced that the Jeudevine Memorial Library was the beneficiary of a bequest amounting to $483,309, left by former Hardwick resident Parker Ladd. Ladd's niece, Karen Ladd Baker, shared her insights into the life of a man who remembered Hardwick as a special part of his life.

Baker currently lives in Pennsylvania, but she has lived in Hardwick, as well, and is well aware of her uncle's connections to the town.

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photo by Vanessa Fournier

Nearly 80 Hazen Union students participated in the National School Walk Out, held last week. Students and faculty stood in silence for 17 minutes to honor the 17 victims of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla.

Hazen Students Walk Out: 'Hey, We Don't Want to Die'

by Doug McClure

HARDWICK — It was an especially cold day, with a sharp north wind and blowing snow, when eighty students walked out of Hazen Union at 10 a.m. last Thursday.

Seventeen minutes of silence represented the seventeen lives taken by a gunman at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

Some kids hugged; others huddled against the cold. A teacher in the crowd saw that one student was upset and gave her a hug. Principal Jack McCarthy stood with the students without a winter coat or hat. Associate principal John Craig also was there, as was Chief of Police Aaron Cochran. The Hardwick Police Department blocked the road with two cruisers, as a precaution.

Seniors Clara Lew-Smith, James Tedesco, and Ronan Hill; junior Abigail Hurd; sophomore Audrey Grant and freshman Leo McMurtrie were among the organizers of the walk-out.

After the event, the students spoke with the Gazette.

"It started after Parkland," said Hill. "They were talking about doing the walkout and we wanted to support them in their cause."

Lew-Smith brought up Fair Haven, Vermont, where Jack Sawyer was arrested recently for allegedly plotting to carry out a mass shooting at his former school.

"It was scary. All of a sudden [it's] happening in our own state. You have this 'it's not happening here' view, so maybe you don't have to worry about it … We should actually do something about this, so our students are safe," she said.

McMurtrie is not originally from Hardwick; he grew up in Boston. He was upset but resolute about speaking up on the issue.

"[In Boston] I've been affected by events such as this. I don't think you can really automatically make someone change their mind about subjects like this. But with the help of the media [and] the walkouts, [we] can really make an impact," he said.

Orleans Southwest Supervisor Union (OSSU) Superintendent Joanne LeBlanc was a part of the conversation when the students initially decided to hold the walk-out. Associate Principal Craig said the students organized the entire event on their own. Hazen did not penalize any kids for the walkout, as some schools around the country have done. Instead, the school was very supportive, as was OSSU, according to the student organizers.

Grant said "We went to Joanne LeBlanc and said we want to do this and the support is there, and she wanted to talk about safety, you

See HAZEN, 3

photo by Will Walters

The Old West Church in Calais received a grant for $20,000 from the Preservation Trust of Vermont for work on the tower and steeple. The building was originally built as a meeting house in 1823. Peter Harvey, vice president of the Old West Church, said only minor repairs have been made since 1832.

Old West Church Tower and Steeple to be Restored

by Will Walters

CALAIS — The Old West Church will get some upkeep to its tower and steeple, supported by a grant of $20,000 from the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation.

Peter Harvey, vice president of the Old West Church, said the Preservation Trust and the state's division of historic preservation have provided money for the building over the past 40 to 50 years.

The building, Harvey said, has not had major work done since construction was finished in 1832. He said most of the work has been minor repair work, with the latest being an asphalt shingle roof and clapboards on the west side of the building. The historic preservation division provided $7,660 in matching funds for the roof in 1993 and $5,500 in 1998 for the clapboards and repainting the outside of the structure. Harvey said "the state and the Preservation Trust have been really behind the Old West Church for decades." He said a new roof is needed every 20-30 years.

In 1979, the Preservation Trust provided a matching funds grant for an assistance report by Mary Jo Llewellyn and in 2001 provided a grant of $20,000 for windows, plaster and woodwork cleaning.

Harvey said there were two steeplejacks who looked at the building. Jay Lewandoski of Stannard submitted a proposal in May, 2016. The other steeplejack declined to take the job, because he preferred to use new materials. Lewandoski will work with the original materials and restore as much as possible with them.

On December 27, 2017 the division of historic preservation sent a letter to the Old West Church granting $20,000, the maximum it could award.

The building is the first meeting house in Calais and was built entirely with donations. It was constructed under the supervision of a Mr. Griffin of Hardwick. Little else is known about him, said Harvey.

The Hemenway Gazeteer reported in 1882 that "In August, 1823, a call was issued, signed by Caleb Curtis, Medad Wright and Nathan Bancroft, asking all interested in building a meeting-house in Calais, to meet at the house of Medad Wright on the 18th of that month." A proposal was developed and accepted at a meeting for the construction, over a three-year period, of a meeting house "40 by 42 feet, 40 pews on the lower floor, five feet by 6, and 18 above of the same bigness." Payment for pews was made in installments of neat cattle and grain.

The Gazeteer said that "The frame of the house was prepared and raised about the middle of October, 1823, under the direction of Lovell Kelton, Esq. As first framed there was a projection in front, supporting the steeple, but subsequently the corners were filled out leaving the building in its present shape. During the two next summers, 1824 and '5 the house was completed, under the direction of Mr. Griffin of Hardwick, Vt."

The dedication was made in November, 1825 by Rev. Mr. Bartlett of Hartland.

"Six religious societies were represented in the ownership of the house and its use was apportioned among them according to the interest owned by each. The first apportionment on record is that for 1828: Baptists, 10 Sabbaths; Universalists 20; Congregationalists 9; Christians 6; Free Will Baptists 4; Methodists 3, and there is no change on record, of this division of the time, until 1848, when it was Universalists, 32; Congregationalists, 7; Methodists, 5; Baptists, 4; Christians, 4. There is no further record. There was no stove in the house until 1831, though [it was] used almost every Sabbath, summer and winter," Harvey wrote in an email.

photo by Vanessa Fournier

Lieutenant Jason Lowell (left) of the Woodbury Fire Department carries a safety collar as Fire Chief Paul Cerutti (right) carries a pike pole that is used to reach out to someone in the water. In the center, firefighter James Daley goes back into the water during a mock ice Water Rescue Training drill on March 17 at Woodbury Lake.

Twinfield and Cabot Hold Parkland Walkouts

by Will Walters

MARSHFIELD/CABOT — Although a snow storm closed school on the day a national walkout was occurring across the nation, students at Twinfield Union School and Cabot School held their own events on March 15 to honor victims of a recent shooting at a high school in Florida and to take a stand on gun violence in schools.

About 40 students at Cabot took part in a walkout in front of the school's main entrance. They were mostly from grades 6-12, although some younger grade students came out and stood with their parents. Other parents attended, as well. Teachers did not discuss the issue of school safety and gun violence in the younger grades, but many students had heard of it independently and had discussed it at home, as a parent letter was sent out earlier in the week, said Principal Dave Schilling. The event lasted 17 minutes. Each minute of silence was in honor of one of the 17 victims of the February 14 shooting at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

"I was very impressed with the civility that pervaded our campus," Schilling said. He said classes continued for those who did not want to walk out and "students were extremely kind and respectful to each other, regardless of their choice."

Schilling said he will travel to Montpelier with some students on March 21 to attend public hearings of the senate and house education committees from 3 to 5 p.m. Students can address legislators during the hearing. Schilling said "Our school's Emergency Response Team is looking into new ways to provide staff with training that is specific to the worst-case scenario of an armed person in the building, or on campus."

"One of the trainings we are looking at is ALICE (Alert Lockdown Inform Counter Evacuate), which uses a train-the-trainer model. Specific staff members receive the training and would then train their co-workers. The ALICE methodology tries to provide educators with a menu of options on how to respond in a school shooter situation. It will also push our thinking on issues related to school safety and preparation."

Washington Northeast Supervisory Union superintendent Mark Tucker said specifics on the emergency procedures will not be made public, as that would undermine their effectiveness.

Twinfield Union School principal Mark Mooney said "[The event] played out just as we wanted. The assembly went well, and it was pretty powerful as the kids read the bios. The majority of our high school and middle school chose to participate in the walkout. They circled up by the bell. A few high school students had prepared statements supporting the Parkland students and their cause. There were some signs made in support of the Parkland students. By 10:25, we were back inside and had a regular day."

Pro-Second Amendment Groups Rally in Montpelier

by Michael Bielawski

MONTPELIER – In the midst of a wave of public and legislative action in favor of stronger gun control measures across the nation and Vermont, pro-Second Amendment groups converged at the Statehouse last Tuesday to voice support for maintaining those rights. Around 300 people, mostly wearing orange, were counted in attendance from afternoon to evening, with little or no opposition protest.

One of the attendees was local firearms safety instructor Lawrence Hamel, who owns the Hardwick Inn and the 1874 Building across the street. Hamel has been an outspoken supporter of Second Amendment rights over the years, and he twice ran for the Vermont House seat currently held by Representative Joseph Troiano, D-Stannard.

Hamel said the message of the gathering was one of distrust for the current occupants at the statehouse.

"We're talking about all these new bills here, raising the age limit [to age 21 to buy], seizing firearms without due process," Hamel said. "Everybody on our side is really real distrustful of everyone we've got [as lawmakers].

Hamel said they had invited Governor Phil Scott to the rally, as well as to other pro-gun events but, so far, he has made few appearances.

Several members of the Sportsmen's Caucus of Vermont attended the rally. Representative Patrick Brennan, R-Colchester, is the co-chair of the caucus.

"People are paying attention, and legislators in particular, they've got a really good sense of just how important the issue is to the hunting and shooting

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In Sports

First Graders to Olympians Ski in Race

Gold Medal Winners At Craftsbury SuperTour

Local Seniors in VBCA All-Star Game

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